UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1999/212
26 February 1999

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 26 FEBRUARY 1999 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to convey the attached communication, dated 11 February 1999, which I have received from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

I should be grateful if you would bring it to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN

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Annex

Letter dated 11 February 1999 from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolution 1088 (1996), I attach the monthly report on operations of the Stabilization Force (SFOR). I would appreciate your making this report available to the Security Council.

(Signed) Javier SOLANA

Enclosure

Monthly report to the Security Council on the operation of the Stabilization Force

1. Over the reporting period (18th December 1998 – 19th January 1999), there were approximately 32, 000 troops deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, with contributions from all the NATO nations, and from 20 non-NATO countries.

2. SFOR continued to conduct surveillance and reconnaissance by means of ground and air patrols. Combat aircraft flew approximately 112 hours.

3. SFOR continues to monitor entity compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1160, which prohibits the transport of weapons into the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), by inspecting Government-owned factories and Weapon Storage Sites and by monitoring crossing points on the border with the FRY. To date, no violations of UNSCR 1160 have been reported.

4. On 9th January, near Foca in Multi-National Division (MND) South-East, SFOR, acting in support of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), identified Dragan Gagovic, who had been indicted for war crimes. Gagovic attempted to evade detention by driving through a checkpoint and trying to run down SFOR troops, who opened fire in self defence. Gagovic was wounded and later died. Tensions increased as a result of the incident, with a crowd of around 800 people demonstrating in front of the United Nations International Police Task Force (IPTF) building in Foca. SFOR troops increased their presence in the area, and elsewhere in the Eastern part of the Republika Srpska (RS). Self - protection measures were also increased in the immediate aftermath of the incident. Tension in the area remains high.

Cooperation and Compliance by the Parties

5. During the reporting period, the Parties remained substantially compliant with the military aspects of the Peace Agreement. As reported last month, in early December there were a number of confrontations between Federation and Croatian police near the disputed border town of Martin Brod in MND South-West. Following the High Representative's ruling that the pre-war demarcation line would remain valid until the two border commissions agreed on the frontier, SFOR troops, acting with the IPTF, removed a number of Croatian policemen from the border area on 23rd December, and established and secured a checkpoint in the vicinity, at the request of the High Representative.

6. On 7th January 1999, 8 general officers were re-assigned or promoted within the Bosnian Croat Army by the Croat member of the Presidency, Mr. Jelavic. This action was taken without the prior approval of COMSFOR, thus violating the Instructions to the Parties forwarded to the joint and entity Presidents and to the Federation and RS Prime Ministers on 6th December 1998. Subsequent to the public announcement of these appointments on 7th January, COMSFOR requested Croat compliance with SFOR directives by 10th January. Following Mr. Jelavic's refusal to comply, SFOR mounted an operation to occupy Bosnian Croat Army sites and to confiscate and destroy items of military equipment. Following negotiations, the Federation Ministry of Defence signalled its willingness to comply with COMSFOR's instructions. Destruction of the weapons was halted and plans made to return the equipment and weapons to the Bosnian Croat Armed Forces.

7. During the reporting period, SFOR troops continued to support the IPTF by providing security for its inspection of local police stations.

8. The RS Specialist Police remain compliant with the Peace Agreement. 154 Police Anti-Terrorist Brigade (PATB) officers are continuing a 3-month policeman-technician course under the auspices of the RS authorities and controlled by the IPTF.

9. Over the reporting period, SFOR troops carried out a total of 246 Weapons Storage Site inspections: 61 Bosniac; 60 Bosnian Croat; 96 Bosnian Serb; and 29 Federation. No major discrepencies were reported. To date, the Entity Armed Forces have closed 74% (104 of 141) of those sites required to be closed between 10th June 1998 and 28th February 1999.

10. SFOR monitored 411 Training and Movement activities over the reporting period: 106 Bosniac; 10 Bosnian Croat; 223 Bosnian Serb; and 72 Federation. A training and movement ban was imposed on four brigades, all belonging to the VII Corps of the Bosnian Serb Army, between 28th December 1998 and 6th January 1999 due to their non-provision of a de-mining campaign plan for 1999. The PATB remains under the Movement and Training Ban imposed in August 1997.

11. Entity Armed Forces de-mining teams have conducted counter mine support operations, which include training, equipment maintenance, reduction in field fortifications and landmine stockpiles, and other related activities. No further mine clearance activities have taken place due to the bad weather conditions. Planning for the new de-mining season has been carried out with the Mine Action Centres becoming involved in the early targeting of areas for Entity Armed Forces' de-mining operations.

Co-operation with International Institutions

12. In accordance with its mandate and within capabilities, SFOR continues to provide assistance to the international institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the Office of the High Representative (OHR), the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMiBH), including the IPTF, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the ICTY.

13. SFOR continues to play an active role in providing support to the OHR in its efforts to establish common institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Standing Committee on Military Matters (SCMM) met on 23rd December 1998 and broadly welcomed the conclusions of the December Peace Implementation Council (PIC) meeting. However, there was an absence of consensus on other issues such as arms control obligations and the Rules of Procedure for the SCMM itself.

Outlook

14. Tensions are expected to remain high within the Eastern RS as a result of the death of Dragan Gagovic on the 9th January. Isolated acts of intimidation and violence are also likely to continue as a result of the return of refugees and displaced persons.

15. Steps are being taken to streamline SFOR without making any major changes in its size and shape, or changing its mission. Options will also be examined for possible longer-term and more substantial adjustments in its future size and structure. Decisions on future reductions will be taken in the light of progress on the implementation of the Peace Agreement.